

# AN INTRODUCTION TO FRENCH MUSIC

BY G. JEAN-AUBRY

MUSIC - UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



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AN INTRODUCTION TO  
FRENCH MUSIC

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

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**LA MUSIQUE FRANÇAISE D' AUJOURD'HUI** (études sur les Clavecinistes, Gabriel Fauré, Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel, etc. Paul Verlaine et les Musiciens, Baudelaire et la musique, etc.). PERRIN & Co., ed., Paris, 1916.

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G. JEAN-AUBRY

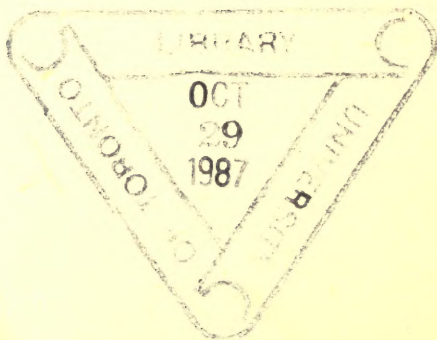
TRANSLATED BY PERCY A. SCHOLÉS

LONDON:

CECIL PALMER & HAYWARD

OAKLEY HOUSE, BLOOMSBURY STREET, W.C.1.

FIRST  
EDITION  
1917  
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TO  
P. A. SCHOLLES



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FOREWORD.

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WHY WE SHOULD STUDY  
FRENCH MUSIC

WAR, with its hopes and sufferings shared in common, has drawn together France and Britain in bonds straiter than those of any mere *Entente cordiale*. At the same moment in history each of them has been compelled to take more exact account both of her own resources and of the characteristics of her Ally. In the tragic glare of war the British and the French have found that they only knew one another superficially and imperfectly ; that a certain number of false notions had been exchanged, one with another across the Channel— often at the instigation of our enemies. Reciprocal understanding, deeper knowledge, these things can only strengthen a friendship become necessary for reasons at the same time ideal and practical.

No other European nation has been a better representative of moral and political liberty than have Britain and France : both have fought for this idea, for the defence of nationalities, and the present war has been for them no more than one further opportunity to remain faithful to their history. Rich, both of them, in a marvellous past, productive in minds powerful or refined, always keeping up, in spite of political divergencies, some measure of intellectual exchange, Britain and France possess characters clearly destined to be complements of one another.

Each is able to offer to the other suggestions of value. The generous rivalry of former days gives place to-day to a necessary emulation. The future of the West, and the peace of Europe, rest upon the close union of Britain and France ; hence nothing British can any longer be a matter of indifference to French curiosity, and every effort of France well deserves the attention of the British mind.

In the domain of Art especially this mutual knowledge is likely to be of profit. Britain and France, particularly during the past five centuries have dowered the world with masterpieces. Right through her excitements, her political changes and her revolutions, France has shewn an inexhaustible power of artistic invention. The most troubled moments of her history have not diminished her intellectual energy. It may even be said that the saddest hours of her national life have been marked by a reawakening of artistic effort. In this the history of French art (in particular of French musical art) teaches a lesson of great moral value.

Few more astonishing examples exist of a sudden revival, of a renaissance, varied and beautiful in its expression. In the work of the French composer of to-day or of bygone days

we taste more quickly and more clearly than in the work of the French poet the distinctive flavour of the spirit of France ; we realise more immediately and more directly the moral and intellectual attitude of the French when face to face with the great universe, or confronted with the emotions and sensations of humanity. Better than any other art, music translates the sentiments and inclinations of every race, of every people, and, in so doing, shows us the deep things of a nation's life.

### **Three Reasons for the Study of French Music.**

The friendship which unites France to Britain would in itself command the interest of the latter for the musical art of the former, but two reasons more for this interest may be added.

French music has to-day arrived at a point of development, at a wealth of expression, which make it one of the most notable fountains at which musical Europe can draw. Like Italy of old, Germany of yesterday, and Russia of yesterday and to-day, musical France of the present time is a phenomenon worthy of the curious interest of the world.

Britain has known, musically speaking, a glorious past. This for two centuries had no continuation, having too readily given place to



foreign influence ; but to-day British music is striving to free itself, to reconquer an independence of spirit, which will assure it henceforth a grandeur like that which it has too easily forgotten. France for about fifty years has been confronted with the same problem ; she also had known a wonderful musical epoch which, little by little, had dropped out of mind ; musical art had disappeared ; people were actually accepting the idea that France was not a country capable of serious music-making. Suddenly, however, French musical art came to life again, and the history of French music of to-day is that of a resurrection. At a time when Britain is thinking, and rightly so, of "nationalising" her musical creativeness, it cannot be useless to see how her great nation-friend compassed this.

### **An Analogy from Spain.**

Should there exist people who fear that the study of French music might result merely in the substitution of another foreign influence for those which have already been active in Britain before the war, it would be easy to reassure them by calling their attention to the fact which follows. About twenty-five years ago Spanish music did not exist—at least in the higher sense of the word "music." Then some younger spirits,

after having studied the classic works which are necessarily at the base of musical instruction, took it into their heads to seek in France indications and suggestions which might help them. To-day Spain possesses a school of music of prime importance, and the greatest and *most Spanish* of the composers of Spain are precisely those who came to work in France.\* Their familiarity with French works has not, then, caused them to lose anything of national quality. On the contrary, it has helped them to find this again.

### **French Influence and German Influence Compared.**

French influence has never, either politically or intellectually, taken on the *absorbent* character of German influence; the French spirit has a tendency towards the freedom of nations. Deprived, as it is, of dogmatism, French art of to-day, as of former days, lays down not absolute principles but *guidance*, from which it is the business of other nations to draw whatever may be of service to themselves. It is in this way that the study of French music seems to me not merely profitable, but actually necessary to music students in Britain.

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\* See "*The Musical Renacimiento*" (Musical Opinion, June and July, 1917).

No one will expect to find here a history of French music. For that a large volume would be required. I attempt here nothing more than a glance over French musical art, in order to show its chief lines and its essential features, and to call attention to the most interesting works. And I offer a little guidance in the study of a production which is, at one and the same time, abundant, varied and original.



I.  
THE HARPSICHORDISTS OF THE  
17<sup>TH</sup> AND 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES

**F**RENCH music was not born in the seventeenth century; from the Middle Ages and during the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries it gave an admirable account of itself, and the work of Henry Expert, in his republication of *Les Chanteurs de la Renaissance*, has unearthed for us a prodigious buried treasure of abounding French musicality of the polyphonic order. Nevertheless in this simple and necessary first sketch I shall begin my treatment of the subject no further back than the seventeenth century. Later than that I cannot begin, for it is impossible to understand truly the spirit, the tendencies, the root principles of French music of to-day, and its special leaning to descriptive and evocative works, if one knows nothing of this period of charm, elegance, refinement and wit—a period when the French harpsichordists, for more than a century, were bringing forth, with the perfection of art and of good taste, an inexhaustible treasure of musical ingenuity.

**Jacques Champion de Chambonnières**

(1620—1670) was the first composer in France who really disentangled harpsichord music from the influences of the organ; this liberation of secular music from ecclesiastical bonds had already been attempted and realised in Italy

by Frescobaldi, but in France it was with Chambonnières that harpsichord music first shook off religious influence and made its way into the drawing-rooms where it was henceforth to reign.

It may be said that Chambonnières is the founder of that school of French harpsichordists which was only to come to its end in the last years of the eighteenth century, at the moment when the Italianism of the virtuoso began to influence in an unfortunate way the ancient purity of style which the French school had up to then never ceased to display.

Considered in relation to his successors, Chambonnières was a musician of mere second rank, but some of his works are charming, and, after two centuries, still keep their freshness. He began to make use of dance forms in keyboard music, particularly those forms which fashion had allowed to fall into disuse, and, being no longer under any necessity to think of any actual dancer, was able to follow his free fancy. The chief clavecinists of the seventeenth century were his pupils—such as d'Anglebert, Lebègue, and the three Couperins.

### **The Couperin Family.**

Here we come to a name at which we must pause a moment, for the Couperin family has

been to France what the Bach family has been to Germany and the Scarlatti family to Italy. Unfortunately these French composers and their works have been too long left to linger in forgetfulness; it is only quite lately that the works of François Couperin have been republished in their entirety, that people have begun to play them again, and that it has come to be understood how much of real musical quality, of charm, and of truth also, they contain.

This large Couperin family, which during two centuries gave France composers and instrumentalists, combined all its highest qualities in the single person of François Couperin, surnamed "the Great." Couperin "le Grand" (1668-1733) is a master who may safely be placed beside Bach and Scarlatti. His work is completely included in four books of harpsichord pieces, first published in 1713, 1716, 1722, and 1730, and republished about twenty years ago.

Since their republication, pianists, as much in France as in England and elsewhere, have devoted their attention too exclusively to a mere dozen pieces, and these always the same, although the composer's output includes several hundreds, the greater number of which are full of charm and of very great educational value



to the executant. Merely to read the titles of these pieces is a pleasure, revealing the sense of the picturesque and of the spiritual, the inclination towards elegance, sensibility, irony, or tenderness, of their composer.

Especially it may be noted that the art of Couperin is in a measure perfect. Repetitions and useless developments are not to be found there, nor are passages of mere pianistic "filling"; Couperin says what he has to say with exactitude, and without a word too much. In this respect he is one of the masters of French musical style.

Admittedly it is useless to seek for the expression of a romantic sensibility. Everything Couperin writes is inspired by discretion and by grace; he does not like to *insist*, he writes for the elect, for cultivated people, and especially he writes for his own pleasure and to satisfy that taste for seeing, for living, for seizing the charm or the absurdity of things and of people—a taste very French, and one to be found again to-day in the composers now around us.

The work of Couperin is abundant and varied; sometimes, even, it appears in the guise of suites, such as the delicious *Les Dominos, ou les Folies Françaises*, or that other (a sort of witty indict-

ment), *Les Fastes de la Grande et Ancienne Ménestrandise*. How many pages there are that one longs to hear again, once one has made their acquaintance and given them a little study from *Le Bavolet flottant*, *La Badine* (a little mannered), the purity of *Lys Naissants*, and all those *Musettes* and *Bergeries* which testify to a true feeling for nature, to the *Rossignol en Amour*, in which is to be found one of the most beautiful scenes in all music, to noble and grave *Soeur Monique*, to the *Carillon de Cythère*, and to the grotesque and playful *Arlequin*.

In these four books is to be found a wealth of invention such as has never been surpassed in France, and it is but as a matter of simple justice that the most original of our French composers of to-day, such as Debussy and Ravel, look upon Couperin as their master.

No one, wishing to grasp the spirit of French Art, can be too strongly urged to study the works of Couperin. The executant will find in them every satisfaction that he can wish ; in them there is something which will meet the demands of both his mind and fingers, for the performance of these pieces is far from being as simple as it appears at first sight. Here again Couperin is richer than he cares to let us see at a first glance ; fully understanding technical difficulties, he

never makes them an end in themselves, but, on the other hand, he never avoids them as a means, when in them he is able to find one element of expression the more.

### **The Sins of the Performer.**

It is regrettable that such a wealth of loveliness should have been so long forgotten : it is also regrettable that certain executants should think it necessary to interpret these works, permeated as they are by grace and by charm, with a cold correctitude ; to do this is to neglect the instructions given by Couperin himself in his first volume. If it is desired to give to the works of Couperin and the other French harpsichordists their real expressiveness, and to respond to the intentions of their composers, they must be interpreted not as antiquarian curiosities or historical revivals, but as works of all time.

All these works came into existence at a time when, happily enough, people thought a good deal more of art than of dogmatism. Couperin himself has written, " I love rather what touches me than what surprises me," and shortly after, Rameau was to write, " You will notice that there is little appearance of the exercise of my science in my productions, for I aim at the art which conceals art." The " cold correctitude " of which I have just spoken is then quite out

of place here ; it is the sense of the picturesque spirit and feeling which ought to be unceasingly present in the mind of the performer, as they were in that of the composer.

### **Rameau.**

So far as keyboard music is concerned, Rameau is the continuation, the complement, and sometimes the contrast of Couperin. Couperin reflects the taste of an amiable society, expert in clever conversation, of delicate perceptions, and given up to pleasure ; Rameau is a man of that logical eighteenth century which was to beget the revolution. Rameau is French rationalism in all its regularity and orderliness, in all its comprehensiveness of preparation, and, paradoxically, in all its freedom and even audacity of expression.

Even to-day one cannot look at the piece entitled *L'Enharmonique* without being surprised at the novelty of its composer's technique and invention. With Rameau French music found its greatest example (up to Berlioz and Claude Debussy) of the union of the strictest science and the most independent invention.

Jean Philippe Rameau (1683—1764) has left only one single book of harpsichord pieces, composed of three little collections published respect-

ively in 1706, 1724 and 1731, with some pieces for trio, of which several are masterpieces. But this single book of *Pièces pour Clavecin* contains hardly anything but works of the first order, either in the technical sense (like *L'Enharmonique*) or in picturesque expression (like *La Poule* or *Le Reveil des Oiseaux*), or in pianistic ingenuity, if one may so speak, considering the period (as in *Les Tourbillons*, or, especially, in the great *Gavotte with Variations*).

The role which Rameau has played in the development of the French lyric theatre might seem to suggest that his work for the keyboard was merely of secondary importance. Nothing of the sort—this latter alone would justify the glory attached to his name; he has carried French keyboard music to the highest point it ever reached before the appearance of our contemporary musicians.

### Daquin, Dandrieu, and others.

With Couperin and Rameau must be mentioned Claude Daquin (1694—1772), whose work has nowadays been reduced in performance to the single *Coucou*, despite the fact that plenty of other works, such as *La Melodieuse* and *La Ronde Bachique*, show him to possess a variety and an elegance of style rivalling those of the two great masters.

And, especially, we must give a high place to François Dandrieu (1684—1740), who has left three collections of harpsichord pieces. Of these a portion only have been republished, among them *Les Tendres Reproches*, which are, perhaps, with Rameau's *Les Tendres Plaintes*, the most moving examples of what French sensitiveness has produced in the keyboard music of past centuries.

After these masters, the standard of French art was more or less upheld by Joseph Nicolas Royer (1700—1765) and Duphly (1716—1788), but the taste for the theatre, the leaning towards virtuosity, and the political troubles by which France was at that time agitated, dissipated the very memory of the works just spoken of, and we have to wait more than a century before we find French composers beginning again to confide to the piano their emotions and sensations with any real and lasting personal feelings. In entering again upon this pleasant path they have rescued from the dust of years and the forgetfulness of man that whole school of harpsichordists whose works have come before our eyes again, eternally fresh and ready still to cast a spell over those who retain a taste for an art which may fairly be described as refined, balanced, witty and elegant.

II.  
HECTOR BERLIOZ  
(1803-1869)

IT may be said without exaggeration that from the death of Rameau up to about 1870, French music ceased to exist. Chamber music was dead, symphonic music non-existent, and the theatre, to which the musical art was now wholly given up, had fallen under Italian and German influences, following, as it did, the road marked by Rossini and Meyerbeer rather than that pointed out by Lully and Rameau.

Nevertheless, in the midst of this desert, a great man suddenly arose, an unexpected figure, a prodigy, who seemed to have undergone no preparation for the role he undertook and to be without any bond of connection with the musical ideas of his time—Hector Berlioz.

### A Miracle of "Vocation."

In the whole history of music the most extraordinary case of a providential *vocation* is that of this musician, knowing nothing of the classics, ignorant of most instruments, and yet the first to endow France with any considerable symphonic work and to renew orchestration at one single stroke. The word "genius" must certainly be applied to Berlioz, despite the imperfections of his work. However one may remark certain temperamental exaggerations, however one may reproach him with a lack of



balance and good taste, it is none the less to be admitted that he remains one of the outstanding figures of the world's music.

No man, not even Wagner himself, expended more energy in the effort to impose his ideas and his work upon his fellows and to triumph over the ill-will of those around him ; no musician has obstinately pursued a single aim with more logical directness in the midst of difficulties innumerable. In the character of Berlioz we see a firm resolve, and one greatly to be admired, never to make the least concession to current ideas. Till the very end he upheld his views and conformed his works to them. All modern orchestration is born of Berlioz—directly or indirectly. More precision and balance have since been brought into it ; the instruments have been more exactly provided with opportunity for the effects of which they are capable, but it was he who, by intuition, by an innate orchestral sense, rejuvenated it, multiplied its resources, and made of it as a whole, not only a symphonic instrument, in the full sense of the words, but a sort of theatre, where the individual instruments are the acting personages of the drama.

Conforming in this to the tastes of his time, and to the literary influences of romanticism, Berlioz drew his intellectual sustenance from the

theatre and from theatrical thought. The actual theatres at his disposition were means too mediocre ; his conceptions were too vast for the narrow stage of the Rossinian or Meyerbeerian opera, and he found only one stage suitable for the realisation of his dreams—that of the orchestra. Whether it be the *Symphonie Fantastique*, the *Carnaval Romain*, *Roméo et Juliette*, or *Harold en Italie*, his symphonic writing carries with it, necessarily, a libretto, a dramatic action, and the symphonic poem is born of that union of music and literature which was bound up with the very nature of Berlioz himself.

### **The Two Periods of Berlioz.**

It is the sombre dramaticism of the *Symphonie Fantastique* and of the *Damnation de Faust* which most vividly strikes the imagination, and by this Berlioz conquered the favour of the public (after his death, alas !). There is, however, to the work of Berlioz quite another side, and one providing perhaps, for a musician, deeper joys ; this is the more balanced Berlioz of the delicious *Enfance du Christ*, of the love scenes of *Roméo et Juliette*, and of the great recitatives of *Les Troyens*. In these he often combines the grand tradition and the tradition which is most really French ; it is a touching thing to see Berlioz, after having thrown into his early and most

celebrated works all the fire of romanticism, seized by the sentiment of *style*, a sort of Virgilian feeling, a need of equilibrium, a wish to throw aside the cries and violences of the romantics and to put in their place the noble purity of the classics, to which he adds the attraction of his orchestral innovations.

It is perhaps in this second part of his work, having put behind one the seductiveness of a great artist's youthful turbulence, that one must seek the immortal and the greatest Berlioz.

### **The Influence of Berlioz on Music To-day.**

Singular as it may seem, the influence of Berlioz has been perhaps, up to to-day, less active in France than it has in Germany (in the case of Richard Strauss, for example).

But indirectly Berlioz's work marks the very birth of the modern French symphonic revival, for neither Wagner nor Liszt was ignorant of the very smallest of Berlioz's researches, and when, thirty or forty years ago, French musicians borrowed from those composers certain procedures or ideas, they often did nothing more than take up afresh, develop or complete the inventions of the great instinctive musician, Berlioz, that well of waters in the parched ground of French music, and the sign and signal of the French musical renaissance.



III.  
THE FRENCH MUSICAL  
RENAISSANCE

SAINT-SAENS, CHABRIER, LALO AND GABRIEL FAURE

IT might almost be said that the advent of Berlioz was the signal for the reawakening of French musical life. At the moment of his death began the development of quite a series of important works, such as were able to make evident the existence of a French school of music and to extend its influence far beyond the frontiers of France itself.

### Saint-Saëns.

Camille Saint-Saëns (born 1835) is the true point of departure of this new movement ; it fell to him to popularise the varied forms of classic musical art, into which he was able to breathe the spirit of the French. Endowed with a great faculty for assimilation, a perfect understanding of the art, and imagination tempered by a classical French taste, he knew the way to unite the teaching of the great German classical writers and of Liszt with that of the forgotten French harpsichordists and opera composers of the eighteenth century.

From 1868 onwards Saint-Saëns was working at his oratorio, *Samson et Dalila*, and in 1871 he began his series of symphonic poems, *Le Rouet d'Omphale*, *Phaëton*, *La Danse Macabre*, and *La Jeunesse d'Hercule*, in which he shewed himself the possessor of ingenuity and of a very

French clarity, in a musical form unknown in France before him.

Saint-Saëns has produced a very abundant body of work, giving forth, with equal happiness of result, chamber music, operas, symphonies, and songs; in default of any incontestable originality he has shewn a cleverness of workmanship and an instrumental sense that are quite unrivalled.

### Faure.

One of Saint-Saëns' pupils, Gabriel Fauré (born 1845) was destined to bestow on his country work of proportions less extended, but of an individuality more marked. The work of Fauré, with the exception of his fine lyric drama, *Pénélope*, is, for the most part, composed for chamber combinations. In these he has been the creator of some works of a distinction and charm quite personal and peculiar to himself. In his songs he has rivalled the greatest composers of the German *Lieder*, and he has given France a wealth of song of its own, in which the musical sense and the literary quality of the poems are bound together in a subtle and moving way. In his *Ballade* for Piano and Orchestra, in his *Sonata* for Piano and Violin (1876), in his two *Quartets*, and in his *Quintet*, he has shewn

a freshness of feeling and a youthfulness of spirit that the years do not touch.

Although he is director of the Conservatoire and Member of the Institute, and is over seventy years of age, Fauré remains to-day the symbol of musical independence. He has had as pupils the most original composers of the rising generation, he is always at their back in their efforts and in their claim for the right of liberty of expression. He himself has never ceased to renew his being, and it is curious to see in the hundred songs he has written since his career first opened how he has been able to rejuvenate his technique and to give his personality means of expression ever more novel and fresh.

### Chabrier.

If Fauré represents one of the happiest expressions of French sensibility, all that the idea of "verve," of French gaiety can evoke, Chabrier (1841—1894) possesses in equal measure the same characteristic. He has been the very *joie de vivre* itself; he has mingled in his work a taste for pleasant irony, for sensibility dissembled by a laugh, with a healthy and captivating humour.

Sometimes, even, as in the second act of *Gwendoline*, and in *L'Ode à la Musique*, he has attained to a level of real grandeur; more often



he has given rein to his liking for the picturesque, for the rhythmic and the highly coloured, as in his rhapsody *Espana*, or in his *Pièces Pittoresques* for piano, in his songs, in his *Bourrée Fantasque*, and in his *Valse Romantique* for two pianos, all works which one must know if one wishes to get any exact idea of the origins of the present-day French school of piano composition. In the work of Chabrier there is a wholesomeness, a spirit of joy, of which one never tires, once one has seized the general tone of it and examined the means by which it is produced : in Chabrier, then, we see the composer who may be styled a Frenchman of the French.

### Lalo.

The works of Edouard Lalo (1823—1892) are now classics. They reveal a discreet and refined nature and a notable carefulness of writing. Everything in them is controlled with exquisite tact ; the sense of the picturesque is not in Lalo abundant and exuberant, as in Chabrier, but subtle and penetrating rather. His *Symphonie Espagnole*, his *Concerto* for Violoncello, and, especially, his opera *Le Roi d'Ys* (1888), show us a musician full of charm and distinction, veritably French in his best qualities.

Lalo's place in the French music of the present day is like his own nature, rather reserved and

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a little self-effaced, but if it is true that his character was not capable of influencing the new generation, if he has not given us any technical innovations personal to himself, his output is nevertheless one of the purest and most refined of the French school, one in which is manifested most successfully, tact, freedom from grosser methods, and aversion from the melodramatic and from "effect"—and in this sense it is the forerunner of some of the most important works of to-day.

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Of the four musicians just mentioned, two have already been dead for twenty years, whilst the other two seem to be endowed with the gift of perpetual youth. It would be instructive to compare the output of these four composers in order to realise in what various ways the French musical spirit was able to express itself through the first generation of those who brought about its re-birth.

IV.  
THE FRENCH MUSICAL  
RENAISSANCE

(continued)

CESAR FRANCK AND HIS DISCIPLES

**I**N the whole very varied modern movement in French music, the only group which has constituted what one generally understands by the words "a school" is that which collected around the person of César Franck. By his æsthetic aims and their musical realisation, and by the kindly dignity of his person, César Franck has had a considerable influence ; he has been a captain in the attack, at a time when, on the battlefield of music, youthful French energy was seeking leadership.

The musical personality of César Franck (1822—1890) has now become part of the inheritance of the world at large ; Franck is to-day a classic master, by the same title as Beethoven or Liszt. The purity and loftiness of sentiment which constantly fed the fires of his inspiration, the nobility of his melodic phrase, the undeniably personal note which is to be found in every one of his compositions, make of Franck one of the very greatest figures of the last century.

To speak with exactitude, Franck is not the absolute and sole possession of French music, for he was born in Belgium, and his works show tendencies intermediate between those of the great classics and those of the true French composers. But the fact that his whole life was passed in France, and that there he conceived his work, with

the still more important fact of the influence he exerted and still exerts there, makes it impossible to omit him from the history of French music.

### Franck's Achievement.

What Franck did for music is nowadays too well-known for it to be necessary to insist upon it here. One may not be able to say that he brought into orchestration or into musical morphology actual innovations, but he knew how to give to the classic forms a new accent and a grandeur worthy of the greatest geniuses the world of music has seen. Works like the *Sonata* for Piano and Violin, the *Quintet*, the *Prelude, Choral and Fugue*, and *Prelude, Aria and Finale* for Piano, the oratorio *Redemption*, and some of the *Beatitudes*, touch the very high-water-mark of the music of the ages.

### Franck's Influence.

Outside his own works, the role of César Franck in the evolution of French music has been to confirm the taste of the younger composers for "pure" music, and to combat (or at least to counterbalance) the influence of Wagnerism. At the time when César Franck, still almost unknown to the great public, was writing his finest works, the taste for and knowledge of Wagner's art of music-drama was beginning to

spread in France, raising a dust of passionate polemics from both sides of the argument. The temptations of the stage might have been multiplied by the success of the Tetralogy, but the loving power of Franck kept a whole group of younger men in a line of march required for the exploration of the resources of which French music had greater need. For France it was not the time to be looking again towards the exploitation of the theatre; before that should come about it was important that she should greatly enrich her symphonic repertoire.

Around César Franck we see appearing a whole generation of young men, of whom the spirit of greatest charm is Charles Bordes, the most gifted Ernest Chausson, the most powerful Vincent d'Indy. Almost at the very birth of the school of Franck died one of his most talented disciples, Alexis de Castillon (1838—1873), whose death resulted from the fatigues of the war of 1870. He left behind him several interesting pieces of chamber music, in which is to be seen the first effort of French music to free itself from the influence of the classics, whilst at the same time making use of their forms.

### **Bordes and Chausson.**

Charles Bordes (1863—1909) and Ernest Chausson (1855—1899) died before having been

able to give out their full message. The work of Bordes has been to revivify the old French music, to raise again from among the debris of the past all the wonderful things there buried in forgetfulness, and to co-ordinate his discoveries for the teaching of the younger generation, taking at the same time his part in the creation of the "Schola Cantorum." As a composer he produced songs of charm and loveable freshness and a *Suite Basque* for Flute and String Quartet—one of the pleasantest realisations extant of the spirit of the picturesque in Chamber Music.

The loss of Ernest Chausson, is, with that of Chabrier, among the most cruel ever sustained by French music. He died at the very moment when he began to free his temperament and his actual character from a quantity of scruples which shackled their expression. Nevertheless he has left several works of great interest, and is one of the French composers most necessary for our study if, for example, we wish to understand the way in which the passage was made from the school of Franck to that of Debussy. He is, in a way, the means of transition between these two great French movements of the end of the last century.

His Quartet for Piano and Strings of which the Andante is one of the most moving pages in

modern music, his *Poem* for Violin and Orchestra, his Concerto for Piano, Violin and String Quartet the admirable *Chanson Perpetuelle* for Voice and Orchestra, twenty varied and refined songs (among them *Les Heures*, *Les Couronnes* and *La Cantique à l'Épouse*), all these show Chausson to be one of the most highly gifted and cultivated of musicians, and one of the surest taste that can be met with in the school of Franck.

All his art is bound up with the great classical tradition, but one feels in it all the time the desire for freedom ; his delicate literary culture and his very audacious pictorial sense influenced in a very happy way his musical inspiration, and in this way worked towards a fusion of the arts, or at least, towards that *exchange* between the different arts which is not one of the least of the characteristics of modern French music.

### Vincent d'Indy.

The work of Vincent d'Indy (born 1851) is chiefly symphonic. Whatever interest his chamber music may offer, it is especially in his Symphonies and in his theatre works (such as *Fervaal* and *L'Etranger*) that he expresses himself completely. Amongst his symphonies one in particular, the *Symphonie sur un thème montagnard français* marks an epoch in the history of French symphonic writing, and re-



mains to-day one of its masterpieces. The often austere inspiration of Vincent d'Indy is enveloped there in an atmosphere so full of charm and so life-giving that the years have rolled by without robbing the work of any of its attractiveness.

### Henri Duparc.

One of the earliest disciples of Franck and one of the oldest friends of d'Indy must here be mentioned, a composer probably almost unique in the annals of European music from the brevity of his working life—Henri Duparc (born 1848). It may be said that it is with a dozen songs that Duparc has made his name known throughout the whole world. To-day songs like *Phydilé*, *L'Invitation au Voyage* and *La Vie Antérieure*, are known everywhere : the simplicity, the deep melancholy of Duparc, and the direct emotional expression of his music make it matter for lament that his personality should be embodied in this one single collection of twelve songs, perfect as they are.

### Paul Dukas.

Although not, properly speaking, a pupil of César Franck, Paul Dukas (born 1865) must be considered as attached to this group, with which he is connected by his personal friendship and some of his æsthetic tendencies.

Universally known for some years by his Symphonic Scherzo, *L'Apprenti Sorcier* (1897), Paul Dukas has written only a few works, but each of them merits attention—the piano works, the *Sonata* (of which the breadth and power rival Beethoven's Op. 106 or Liszt's great Sonata), the *Variations on a Theme of Rameau* (which display the admirable technical sureness of touch of their composer), the *Symphony in C* and the ballet *La Péri* (in which Dukas appears as a rival of the most sparkling composers of modern Russia). Finally must be mentioned *Ariane et Barbe-bleue*, which may be called rather a "theatre-symphony" than an opera, but which is certainly one of the richest and most forceful stage pieces written in France for half-a-century.

#### **Pierre de Breville.**

Amongst the group of pupils of César Franck, over whose companionship Vincent d'Indy has presided since the death of the master, must still further be named Pierre de Bréville, a subtle and specially French musician to be reckoned with Fauré, Duparc and Chausson amongst the best song composers. His songs founded on popular French themes testify at one and the same time to a very refined musical nature and to a particularly true sense of the most charming type of French feeling.

**Alberic Magnard and Guy Ropartz.**

Finally must be mentioned two powerful symphonic writers who mingled the influences of Wagner and of Franck, influences united in each case with a personality a little rough, and separated by some distance from the customary charm of French music or the small conceptions with which French composers have been too often and too inconsiderately reproached. The two composers in question are Alberic Magnard (died 1914), the severely classical author of a Sonata, a 'Trio, a Quartet, several symphonies and two dramatic works, *Guercoeur* and *Bérénice*, and Guy Ropartz, known by a beautiful lyric drama, *Le Pays*.

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A second generation has been coming forward for some years now, as a consequence and prolongation of the group just treated, but it has merely a distant connection with César Franck, and has come under the influence and the teaching of the works of Debussy, who should first be spoken of.



V.  
CLAUDE DEBUSSY

JUST as at one time the work of Berlioz was enough to show the musical possibilities of France, so the presence of Debussy would have sufficed in itself to draw upon France the attention of the whole of musical Europe. In the matter of technical innovation the appearance of Debussy is as important in the history of music as that of Haydn, of Mozart, of Beethoven, or of Liszt, for he is not merely a composer of attractive personality but one of those rare geniuses capable of renewing the very means of expression of an art.

Not that Debussy has, to speak exactly, *invented* any one of the means he has used, but his use of them has been so wise, so evocative of feeling and so sensitive that in these respects he has no equal in our times.

Ever since Debussy's works attained universal celebrity, critics have been tumbling over one another in the effort to prove that the elements of his innovations are to be found in many works of former times, in Russian compositions, and even in the work of Wagner. Nevertheless in the music of Debussy rings an accent which is to be heard in no other. He has known how to assimilate in a most wonderful way what he has taken from Monteverde, from Chopin, or from Schumann, from Liszt, from Moussorgsky, or

from the Wagner of *Parsifal*, if you like to say so. From his very first works (such, for instance, as *La Damselle Elue*), he proved himself to be a musician of a really personal touch, clever in seizing the smallest shades, the most subtle modifications of thought and of sentiment, the most fugitive glimmerings, the most rapid play of light and shade.

### Some Characteristics.

Admittedly other people before him have used successions of seconds and ninths, and the whole-tone scale was to be seen in works anterior to his. But the personality of Debussy is not essentially the product of these technical procedures; it is made up, before everything, of a very personal sensibility, in which are combined the sense of atmosphere and the most acute intelligence.

Like the poet whom he has illustrated musically in his *Cinq Poèmes* (Baudelaire), Debussy attains the most extreme subtlety, the most penetrating refinement, by exceedingly simple means. It must be admitted that the first time one hears a work of Debussy one is singularly attracted by the harmonies used, and even tempted to imagine that in them lies its principal merits; later, however, one discovers that there are many other qualities which are rarer still.

First amongst these comes a perfect good taste and an unexampled sense of proportion ; from his earliest days, Debussy has had an horror of the disproportionate, of development without any expressive end, of " dilution." With Robert Louis Stevenson he thinks that the great art is one of omission ; and he puts into his work nothing that is unessential.

### **The Old French Tradition in Debussy.**

It is by this that he is linked up with the musicians of old France, it is for this that he looks upon them with a particular affection, and that one of the most beautiful of his piano pieces bears the title of *Hommage à Rameau*. It is this taste for emotion at one and the same time conscious and yet without other control than its own sweet will, that has led him to disdain the dogmatic rules of the professors of harmony, and once again to give music its freedom. He has bestowed on music an almost indefinite liberty, he has turned back to the most ancient forms—those which showed no evidence of restraint though controlled within academic limits ; he has turned back to Plain Chant, to picturesque and *spirituelle* evocations of feeling. In his opera, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, he has turned back to the old principles of the most direct declamation ; he has cast aside the shackles of



the *leit-motif*, of themes used over and over again in various ways. His work is always of the nature of an ordered fantasy. He has not wished to submit to out-of-date restrictions ; he has thought that each subject ought to carry its form with it, not that one ought, so to speak, to take an empty form in one's hand, and pour something into it.

### Career and Compositions.

Claude Debussy was born the 22nd August, 1862, at Saint-Germain-en-Laye, a royal town in the heart of typically French country. He received the classic education of the Paris Conservatoire and obtained the highest rewards, including the Prix de Rome, so much desired by all young composers. From thence onwards, however, Debussy showed a quite unacademic disposition ; at eighteen he wrote his song, *L'Ombre des Arbres dans la Rivière* (published later in his *Ariettes Oubliées*), which already testifies to the existence of a distinctly Debussyist style.

*La Damoiselle Elue* was his second work sent from Rome (1887), the composer at first refusing to allow its performance, the first work sent, *Printemps*, not having had the happiness to please the members of the Academy of Fine Arts.

Since then Debussy has given to the world an abundant body of work, of which a great part is for piano and for voice. His piano collections entitled *Estampes*, *Images*, *Préludes*, and *The Children's Corner*, as also *L'Isle Joyeuse*, have made him one of the most important of French composers for this instrument, and the rival not only of the French harpsichordists, but of the classic Germans. A remarkable ingenuity of writing, a perfect sense of proportion, an originality in his means of suggesting thoughts and emotions—all these things are combined in these pieces, which in turn express a sense of things seen, emotions felt, or spiritual rhythms.

In his songs, whether they translate into tone the grace of Verlaine, the frank and perverse sensuality of Pierre Louys, or the concentrated emotion of Baudelaire, Debussy penetrates as deeply as the poets into the most hidden parts of the human soul ; so completely does he project himself into the poems that in re-reading them afterwards without the music it seems to us that something has now gone out of them.

In his Chamber Music, which up to the present includes only one Quartet and three Sonatas, he has shown how readily the most classic forms may be bent to the will of genius. In his Sonatas he has abandoned the tradition of the classic and

romantic sonata and has taken his cue direct from the old eighteenth century sonatas, shorter and freer than those of the following period. He has set himself to discover new instrumental combinations of two or three instruments, and has succeeded admirably in this attempt in the case of one of his latest works, a *Sonata for Flute, Viola and Harp*, one of a series, the completion of which must be a matter of interest to all musicians.

In his orchestral works, Debussy has shown the same qualities, from that exquisite chef-d'œuvre, the *Prélude à l'Après-midi d'un Faune* (1892), in which is enshrined all the sunshine of a lovely summer afternoon, to the *Nocturnes*, the powerful and attractive trilogy of *The Sea*, and those many-hued, rich and rhythmic *Images*.

### **Pelleas et Melisande.**

To the theatre, finally, he has given the purest masterpiece, the simplest, most novel, and most moving, a work which is for French music at one time its *Tristan* and its *Parsifal*, and, perhaps the most perfect existing example of modern musical French art.

To understand the French musical tradition, to understand the most truly national French artistic spirit, it is enough to study the orchestral score of *Pelléas*, after having heard a performance

of it. The principle of French art will be at once grasped—that of producing the maximum of expression with the minimum of means, a principle here applied with constant care and the happiest result.

No excess of orchestration, no useless noise, each instrument placed exactly where it will produce all the effect of which it is capable, the melodic line which is nearest to that of the human voice and human recitation (without the monotony of actual recitative), the music following, second by second, the “moral modulation,” if one may so call it, of the personages of the drama—these are the characteristics of *Pelléas et Mélisande*. All that in *La Damselle Elue* had been sketched within the more restricted limits of a small cantata, is fully realised in a five-act drama ; terror, hope, violence, love and death meet here, disputing and triumphing, without any shriek of disorder, but leaving in the soul of the hearer the unforgettable emotion of their exact and fatal course.

### Debussy and Strauss.

Since the death of César Franck and of Rimsky-Korsakof, Claude Debussy and Richard Strauss remain incontestably the greatest figures in European music, and the future will show that

it is the French composer who has least to fear from the ravages of time, and that it is he who has brought into music not only the greatest number of innovations or of technical novelties, but also the greatest amount of human emotion—and this is, first and last, the justification of art.

The influence of Debussy has now been exerted for twenty-five years. Wherever music is composed all the most original spirits of our time have felt its charm, but this charm is not deadening for the imagination of the younger artists; and the whole most recent generation of French musicians, if it has profited by the lessons of this great composer, testifies that he has done nothing which has tended to dry up at their very source the streams of the music of France.



VI.

THE POST-DEBUSSYISTS

MAURICE RAVEL, FLORENT SCHMITT, ALBERT ROUSSEL,  
DEODAT DE SEVERAC, ETC.

**Maurice Ravel.**

**D**ERIVING on certain sides from Debussy, yet his predecessor in piano composition (the *Jeux d'eau* was composed in 1900), deriving also from Fauré and especially from Chabrier so far as the sense of humour is concerned (a humour less exuberant and more affected than that of the composer of the *Bourrée Fantasque*), Maurice Ravel (born 1875) is certainly one of the most attractive personalities in modern French music ; he is one of the most "spirituel" of composers, in all the various senses that may be given to the word "esprit," whether it be used to designate that supreme flower of the intelligence, the ability for prompt and apt repartee, or (in quite another way) to indicate the unreal and disembodied personalities met with in a fairy tale. For the individuality of Ravel is something indefinable ; it escapes all classifications and combines charm and piquancy according to a new prescription.

Works such as the *Jeux d'eau*, or the *Miroirs*, or the three pieces included in *Gaspard de la Nuit*, have enriched the piano with a sense which is an advance upon anything foreseen by Chopin, by the Russians, or by Chabrier. And, at the same time, in his orchestral works (such as the *Rhapsodie Espagnole*, and, especially, *Daphnis et*



*Chloë*) he has exhibited a sureness of touch and an orchestral ingenuity of the finest order. His *Quartet* (1903) and his *Trio* (1915) are works which as the days pass are rapidly becoming classics, and in which are to be seen a youthful spirit, and a profound simplicity, hidden behind the chequered charm of sonorous colourings.

Maurice Ravel also, then, is a composer intensely French in character. The taste for wit, for irony, for the comic, even, to be found in such works as *Histoires Naturelles*, or *L'Heure Espagnole*, does not succeed in entirely hiding the real and fine sensibility with which his heart is filled. With that discretion which is the honour of French art he does not think it necessary to shriek aloud or to dramatise his emotions.

For long, people pretended to see in Ravel nothing more than an affected arranger of tiny combinations of sonorities, a merely ingenious musician. Nowadays they begin to realise that there is in him a fine and deep sensibility, perpetuating amongst us, with modern refinements, something of the spirit of Mozart. In the whole of French chamber music there is nothing fresher, more deliciously youthful, than the *Quartet* of Ravel, and the *Sonata* of Fauré: master and pupil have here shewn us the immortal freshness of the French race—which

neither culture nor cleverness can ever exhaust, attenuate, or even tarnish.

### **Florent Schmitt.**

If Maurice Ravel is one more example of the eternal grace of French art, Florent Schmitt is a witness to its power. Mingling in his personality the most contradictory influence, deriving at one and the same time, from Franck, from Debussy, and from Chabrier, Schmitt (born 1870) a powerful, even violent, soul, expresses his sensibility without regard to schools, to contradictions, to the opinions of the various groups around him. Schmitt can be classed nowhere; he is, at the same time, both a classic and a modern of the moderns; he cares little of what materials he makes use, provided he expresses exactly what he wants to express. And of this strange mingling is born an incontestable personality, capable of the production of enormous works such as the *Quintet* or the *Psalm XLVI.*, which shows that Germany has no monopoly of *power* in music, and that the French vocabulary, also, is able to lend itself to works on the grand scale, without falling into the merely declamatory, or into empty "development."

**Albert Roussel.**

In the very first rank of quite recent French composers must be mentioned Albert Roussel (born 1869). If he has not yet won for himself the already universal reputation of Ravel, he is about to attain this.

A pupil first of Vincent d'Indy, very much drawn, on the other hand, to the refinements of Debussyism, Roussel has slowly and cautiously discovered his own personality. Expressing himself by turn in piano works, songs, a *Trio*, a *Sonata for Piano and Violin* (one of the most interesting in the whole French repertoire), he attains at last a most individual and really remarkable form of self-expression in a Symphonic Suite, *Evocations* (1911), which is assuredly one of the greatest master-works in orchestral music since the works of Debussy and Ravel. Composed after a voyage to India, this suite reproduces, with charm and profound originality, the impression left in the soul of the composer.

Roussel's art makes one think of the best French landscape painters ; solidly constructed, the framework of his pieces is enwrapped in a covering of tenderness and delicacy, the sense of the picturesque never playing the emotions false. His work reminds one a little of

that of Lalo, as to its general nature, but with all the novel resources of the latest developments of the musical art.

### **Deodat de Séverac.**

Déodat de Séverac (born 1873) belongs, like Roussel, to the group of Franck's descendants, for he is a pupil of d'Indy : but, like Roussel, he has, in a certain measure, received the imprint of Debussyism. Unlike the other composers of the present-day French school, de Séverac has done little to increase the treasures of symphonic music. The most important part of his work is made up of three books of piano pieces, *Le Chant de la Terre*, *En Languedoc*, and *Cerdaña*, in which he sings the beauty and charm of the landscapes of his own southern province. He approaches somewhat the tendencies to be noted in the work of Albeniz in the suite, *Iberia* ; to a certain degree he is a sort of natural transition between the modern French and Spanish schools—schools bound to one another by so many sympathies and by such similar leanings.

### **Some Other Composers.**

Still to be mentioned is Paul Ladmirault (born 1877), who has placed his symphonic knowledge and his very charming sense of melody at the service of the Breton soul, of

which he has become the most reliable and the most original confidant.

Then there is Gabriel Grovlez, whose two collections, *Improvisations sur Londres* and *Fancies*, are very justly appreciated in London.

Erik Satie, too, is to be mentioned—a precursor of Debussy and a musical humorist whose well of fancy has never dried up ; and so, too, is Maurice Delage, a pupil of Ravel, who in his *Poèmes Hindous* has given us one of the most faithful and curious transcriptions of Asiatic musicality.

Many other composers ought here to be cited, for the desert of yesterday has given place to-day to a glorious garden, where flowers rare and simple, with perfumes delicate and health-giving, fragrant and penetrating, are mingled and ranged for the lasting pleasure of mankind.



VII.  
THE LYRIC STAGE

**I**F Chamber Music has taken the place of importance in France, and if it is more easily accessible for study, we must nevertheless not forget that the art of theatre has followed much the same pleasant road.

The French taste for the lyric stage has never been lost : no one can say that the lyric art in France has ever experienced the same submersion as chamber music at any period in history since the seventeenth century. From Lully to Debussy there is a thread of connection—hardly ever broken—of works in which the most noble sense of art alternates with the finest expression of wit, or may be, merely with the caprices of fashion.

In entering France from Italy, opera came into contact with the pure tragedy of the century of Louis XIV. ; an effort was made to combine the spectacular with declamation closely founded upon that of the Théâtre-Français, and from Lully (1633—1687) onwards, French opera gave proof of the possession of a moving expressiveness. In *Thésée*, in *Amadis*, were already to be found songs, the beauty of whose melodic line has not weakened in effect after two centuries. With Lully, such musicians as Marchand, Campra, Mondonville and, especially, Rameau, carried the musical stage to a level never before



attained in any country, and by this Gluck greatly profited.

### Rameau and the Theatre.

After having waited until the age of fifty years without approaching the stage, Rameau did so with marvellous splendour and truth. *Hippolyte et Aricie*, *Dardanus*, *Les Fêtes d'Hébé*, and ten other lyric works (amongst them the charming opéra-comique *Platée*) attest to the fact that Rameau was a lyrical dramatist worthy of being considered a rival of Monteverde, and the one who has opened the path to all that has happened since in this sphere of activity. Unfortunately, Gluck, in coming to France for inspiration from the works of Rameau, seems to have carried abroad for some time the secret of the great French works. Méhul alone (1763—1817), in his *Joseph*, sustained the beauty of a form of art the fashion of which was changing.

### The Lighter Opera.

French music quitted the serious stage for a more intimate type of art. The composers of opéra-comique such as Dalayrac (1753—1809), Monsigny (1729—1817), and Grétry (1741—1813), poured into a hundred works a freshness and wit to-day too often forgotten. Even now it would be possible to find some life amongst

all this luxuriant growth of French opéra-comique of the end of the eighteenth century. Boieldieu (1775—1834) carried on the tradition of it until the first half of the nineteenth century in such works as *La Dame Blanche* and *Le Calife de Bagdad*, but the abuse of virtuosity, the desire to please, and to produce striking effects by means for the most part useless, took possession of the French stage with Rossini, Meyerbeer and their followers. What was called "French Opera" in their days had nothing French about it but the name, and, as a matter of fact, it marks the moment of lowest ebb in the lyric production of France.

### **The Work of Gounod and his Successors.**

It is to Gounod (1818—1893) that must be accorded the honour of putting on the stage works in which real music had a greater place, and, unbiassed by either the Italian operas or the first Wagnerian dramas, of composing operas really French in spirit and in melodic line.

The charm of Gounod is to be sought not only in his works posterior to *Faust* and *Roméo et Juliette*, but in those of his musical descendants, in the first ranks of whom must be especially mentioned Massenet (1842—1912), who, after having experienced an excessive degree of

favour seems now to be too little regarded. There is an undoubted charm in certain of his works: *Manon*, *Werther*, and, especially, *Le Jongleur de Notre Dame* and *Griselidis*, deserve still something more than a half-disdainful sympathy.

Whilst composers who specialised in opera were doing little more than reproduce the gestures of their predecessors (as Reyer did those of Berlioz and of Wagner), the French theatrical musical renaissance was brought about for the most part by the composers who only wrote occasionally. Bizet, the glorious composer of *Carmen* and *L'Arlésienne*, was, of course, an exception in this respect, as has been also Alfred Bruneau (born 1857), who in *Le Rêve*, *L'Attaque du Moulin*, *Messidor*, and *L'Ouragan*, has shewn gifts of expressive dramatisation, forcefulness being tempered by an ingenious sensibility, in one of the most curious combinations that the French stage has ever seen.

It was the symphonic writers who re-introduced on the stage the most purely musical pre-occupations, and attempted to make use of them without following the teaching of Wagner. One after another appeared that masterpiece of grace, Lalo's *Le Roi d'Ys* (1888) the passionate *Gwendoline* of Chabrier (1886), that

unique attempt at musical realism, Charpentier's *Louise* (1900), Chausson's *Le Roi Artus*, d'Indy's *Fervaal* (1895), and *L'Etranger* (1901), Mag-nard's *Bérénice*, and (especially to be noted) that stage-symphony, *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue* (1907), and the pure and noble *Pénélope* (1914) in which Fauré grasps again, with more modern manners of expression the grand tradition of Rameau. Lastly must be mentioned that masterpiece insusceptible of classification, *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1902).

Its attention being turned towards serious things by the echoes of Bayreuth, contemporary theatrical art has given birth in a special abundance to operas and dramas. Perhaps we shall see the reappearance, in a more worthy form, of the comédie-lyrique, or opéra-comique, a French form par excellence. Already Chabrier, in *Le Roi malgré lui*, Ravel in *L'Heure Espagnole*, and Henri Rabaud, in *Marouf, Savetier du Caire*, have given witty and original examples.

The Russian Ballet, in bringing back to Paris, in a developed form the "Opera à divertissement" of the France of former days, has suggested to French composers that they should take up again a form so lovable, and so rich in resources. With the return of peace we shall see the results of this suggestion.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

**I**T is impossible exactly to foresee what the French Music of to-morrow will be like. The war came at the very moment when musical France was both searching the distant horizon and examining the past and the present before entering upon new roads. But when we consider how low French music had fallen in the middle of last century, when we see how rapid has been its rise, and how great its fertility, compared with that of other nations which are still groping, no hope seems to be out of place. We must remember that, at the end of the eighteenth century these strange words were written—

“ I think I have made it clear that there is neither measure nor melody in French music, because the language is not capable of these ; that French song is nothing but a prolonged bark, insupportable to any unprejudiced ear ; that its harmony is crude, expressionless and merely reminiscent of pupil-work ; that the French airs are no airs at all ; that French recitative is really no recitative.

“ From all this I conclude that the French have no music, and can never have any—or if ever they do, so much the worse for them.”

It must be admitted that the writer who left Geneva for France to make this great prophecy, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in his long *Letter on*

(or rather, "against") *French Music*, had got a little off the track.

Already, at the moment of his writing, France had had its Renaissance singers, its harpsichordists, its opera composers, from Lully to Rameau, yet Rousseau deliberately ignored all these, and thought it possible from his vantage-point of *parti-pris* to gaze into the future. But French music, both before and after Rousseau, has given undoubted proofs that it *does* exist—perhaps, however, these proofs have never been so conclusively set forth as during the last forty years.

On the morrow of the Franco-German War, the French consciousness, in all its ramifications, underwent a reawakening. United efforts were made; the young composers vied with one another in the struggle, and formed that Société Nationale de Musique (founded 1871) which has been the great crucible in which have been put to the proof the chamber music works of Saint-Saëns and Ravel, of César Franck and Debussy. Here, in a friendly rivalry, younger composers have compared their discoveries, their attempts and their successes, and of this emulation has been born a French School, ready for self-revelation in the most various of styles.

The example of Berlioz proves with certainty that genius may spring to birth suddenly, almost without any link with the past, and in opposition to its surroundings, and this even, at the very moment when the future of the art seems the most hopeless. But the history of French music, from 1870—1890 particularly, proves even better, and with incomparable brilliance, that when an art, in any particular country, is in a state of little more than bare survival (and is, indeed, nothing better than a mere feeble imitation of the art of foreign masters) it needs, if it is really to live again in any worthy way, and to be in its turn an influence in the world, to consider again its ancient tradition, to trace its stream back to its sources, to study its past, to listen to the throbbings of its own soul, and to look at itself in its own mirror of nationality, without vanity and without weakness.

For a nation which knows its own soul cannot fail to attain to the production of a song proper to itself and suited to its own self-expression.





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- W. H. Hadow: *Studies in Modern Music* (First Series), Chapter on Berlioz (Seeley, Service, London).
- Mary Hargrave: *The Earlier French Musicians* (1632-1834). (Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1917).
- Arthur Hervey: *French Music in the Nineteenth Century* (Grant Richards, 1902).
- J. W. Hinton: *Reminiscences of César Franck* (*The Music Student*, Oct.-Dec., 1911; republished as a pamphlet by W. Reeves, 6d).
- T. F. Hoggett and M.-D. Calvocoressi: *French Music: Couperin and his Contemporaries, Lully and Rameau, Opera in France, Berlioz and Gounod, The Turning Point, Franckism and Impressionism, More about Modern French Composers* (*The Music Student*, Oct.-May, 1911, out of print).
- G. Jean-Aubry: *Chamber Music in France: Florent Schmitt and Gabriel Dupont* (*The Music Student Supplement*, July, 1914), *French Music and Musicians* (with many portraits) (*Ladies' Field*, Feb. 24; March 10-24; April 7-21; May 5-19; June 9).
- Mrs. Franz Liebich: *Claude-Achille Debussy* (John Lane, 1908).
- M. Montagu-Nathan: *Modern French Sonatas for Piano and Violin* (*The Music Student Supplement*, Jan., 1914-Jan., 1915).
- Ernest Walker: *The Preludes of Debussy* (*The Music Student*, April-June, 1912).

#### FRENCH BOOKS.

##### Old French Music.

- Fétis: *Biographie universelle des Musiciens* (Didot, Paris).
- Pierre Aubry: *Trouvères et Troubadours* (F. Alcan, Paris).

Michel Brenet : *Musique et Musiciens de la Vieille France* (F. Alcan, Paris).

Alfred Bruneau : *La Musique Française*, a sketch of music in France from the 13th to the 20th century (Fasquelle, Paris).

Jules Ecorcheville : *De Lully à Rameau* (Published by Marcel Fortin, Paris).

Ch. Malherbe : *Notice sur J. P. Rameau*, appearing as introduction to the first volume of the works of Rameau (Durand, Paris, 1895).

Louis Laloy : *Jean-Philippe Rameau* (F. Alcan, Paris, 1908).

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Henri Prunières : *Lully* (Laurens, Paris).

Romain Rolland : *Musiciens d'Autrefois* (chapters on the opera and on Lully) (Hachette, Paris, 1908).

#### Modern French Music.

Adolphe Boschot : *L'Histoire d'un Romantique : Hector Berlioz*, 3 volumes (Plon Nourrit, Paris).

G. Jean-Aubry : *La Musique Française d'Aujourd'hui* (Perrin, Paris, 1916).

Romain Rolland : *Musiciens d'Aujourd'hui* (articles on Berlioz, Saint-Saëns, d'Indy, and *Pelléas et Mélisande*) (Hachette, Paris, 1910).

Vincent d'Indy : *César Franck* (F. Alcan, Paris).

Henry Gauthier Villars : *Georges Bizet* (Laurens, Paris).

René Martineau : *Emmanuel Chabrier* (Dorbon Ainé, Paris).

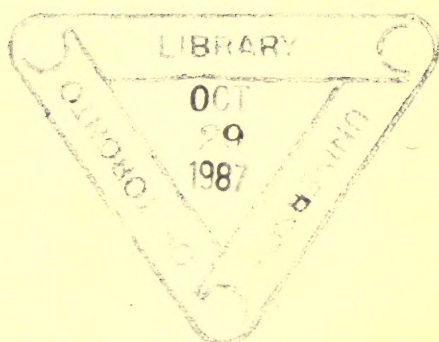
J. Desaynard : *Emmanuel Chabrier* (Fischbacher, Paris).

Louis Laloy : *Claude Debussy* (Dorbon Ainé, Paris, 1909).

Roland Manuel : *Maurice Ravel* (Durand, Paris).

Octave Séré : *Musiciens Français d'Aujourd'hui*, biographical and bibliographical notices, with list of compositions (Mercure de France, 1911).





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